# Elevate Season 7 Application Guide

# General Information

1. **Project name**

**Here, you write down your startup team's name (the name of your present/future company)**

***Example: MealMate***

2. **Describe your idea.**

**Tell us about your ideas, mission, and vision. What prompted you to start work on your project?**

***Example: MealMate is a mobile app that helps students and young professionals plan cheap, healthy, and quick meals using AI and a limited grocery list. Our mission is to make cooking accessible and stress-free for people on a budget. We started the project after constantly struggling with deciding what to eat and wasting money on takeout. Our vision is to help people build better food habits through technology.***

3. **What is the main driver for you to apply for the Elevate accelerator?**

**Why did you decide to apply? (Friend recommendation, motivation from past seasons, etc.)**

***Example: One of our classmates was in Elevate last year and said it was a game-changer. We want to be surrounded by like-minded teams, get real feedback, and build something that can go beyond just an idea.***

4. **What outcome do you expect from your participation?**

**Is it the mentorship, funding, safe environment, peer-to-peer communication or something else?**

***Example: We're most excited about the mentorship and learning how to build a real product from scratch. Getting to talk to people who've already built startups is a huge motivator for us. We're also interested in the structure and accountability the program provides.***

# Team

5. **How many people are there in the team?**

**Just the number here.**

***Example: 3.***

6. **Please describe each founder's background and experience.**

**What have each of you done in the past that's worth sharing?**

***Example:***

***Lina Georgieva – UX/UI design & marketing. 2nd-year Business & Design student, did an internship in a branding agency, and loves building user-first experiences.***

***Kiril Petrov – Full-stack developer. 3rd-year Computer Science student, has worked on 3 web projects as a freelancer and helped build his high school's website.***

***Viktor Dimitrov – Product manager. 2nd-year Business student, involved in the Entrepreneurship Club and organized the uni's last startup weekend.***

7. **Provide existing shareholding among the team members and investors (if any).**

**No need to be fancy here. Just list the percentages.**

***Example: Equal split – 33.3% each. No investors at the moment.***

8. **What other commitments will each of you have throughout the academic year?**

**List all the things you'll be doing alongside Elevate during the programs. Ideally, give a breakdown of how many hours per week you will be devoting to each activity.**

***Example:***

***Lina – Full-time student (30 hours/week), works part-time as a design intern (10 hours/week), MealMate (10–15 hours/week)***

*Kiril – Full-time student (25 hours/week), freelancing (5–10 hours/week), MealMate (15–20 hours/week)*

*Viktor – Full-time student (30 hours/week), runs a club (5 hours/week), MealMate (10 hours/week)*

9. **How do you know your co-founders? How long have you worked together?**

**Self-explanatory, be brief.**

*Example: We met in our first year at university. We worked on two class projects together and took part in a student startup weekend where MealMate was born.*

10. **Who are your mentors/advisors (if you have any)**

**Could be your parents, friends, professors or anyone outside of your company that will be assisting you along the way.**

*Example: Our marketing professor, Prof. Daniela Yaneva, is helping us think through our positioning. Also, Lina's older brother has a small food delivery business and gives us input on user behavior and pricing.*

11. **Provide a video explaining your project and your team (no more than 3 minutes)**

**We don't expect cinema-level production quality. The aim of the video is to get a general feeling of the team's vibe, dedication and enthusiasm in a timely manner. Try to stay under the 3-minute limit as that will be a great exercise for what's to come in the program.**

# Product

12. **What problem does your product or service solve? What is unique about your approach to the problem?**

**Be very specific here. Describe exactly what the problem is, how did you identify it and what makes your solution novel/interesting.**

***Example: Students often waste money on takeout or cook unhealthy meals because they don't know what to make or don't have time to plan. MealMate generates personalized recipes based on what users already have at home and how much time they have. Our approach is unique because it focuses specifically on budget cooking for students, not just general recipes.***

13. **Provide a link to your web site/demo etc. (if any)**

**Useful if you have it but not required.**

14. **Describe your product or service. What is your MVP? (if any)**

**MVP – minimum viable product. In layman's terms – what are the bare minimum specifications/characteristics of you product/service that you will be comfortable showing to the world as a proof of concept?**

***Example: Our MVP is a web app where users input a few ingredients and get 3 AI-generated recipe suggestions in under 30 seconds. The MVP also shows cost per portion and prep time.***

15. **Are there any substitutes? What differentiates you? Include URLs**

**Give us some insight into the competitive landscape in your industry. Who are your competitors? Why are they popular? What are they doing right? How will your approach be better and make their existing customers switch to your solution?**

***Example:***

***Yes, there are some similar apps like:***

- ***Supercook (https://www.supercook.com/)***

- *Yummly (https://www.yummly.com/)*
  *They are more generic and often focus on advanced cooking. MealMate is built for students – minimal ingredients, clear steps, quick prep, and low cost. We're also experimenting with integrating a shared shopping list for roommates.*

**16. How do or will you make money?**

**What is your business model? Is it a one-time purchase, will you offer a subscription service, some combination of the two, or something entirely different?**

*Example: We plan to offer a freemium model – free basic recipes, and a monthly subscription (€2.99) for features like meal plans, calorie tracking, roommate meal coordination, and grocery budget tracking.*

# Market

**17. Who are you selling to (be as specific as you can)?**

**Describe your ideal customer. What problems and character traits do they possess that makes them the perfect person to pay for your solution?**

***Example: Primary users are students aged 18–25 living on their own or in shared flats. They're busy, often on tight budgets, and want to save time and money while still eating healthy.***

**18. What is the estimated size of your target market?**

**Define your market. It is geographic, demographic, etc. How big is it, how much of it can you address and what is the expected growth of that market in the coming years?**

***Example: In Europe, there are over 18 million students in higher education. We estimate at least 25% live away from home and are potential users. That's about 4.5 million people. The student market grows steadily every year, especially as more students move abroad or into cities.***

**19. What steps have you taken to validate the market? (if any)**

**Do you have any customers, prospects or people who demonstrate interest in your product/service? It's perfectly fine to not have any of those in the "idea" stage of your startup.**

***Example: We ran a survey with 200 students across 3 universities – 72% said they would use an app like this, and 50% said they already look for "what to cook" almost daily. We also posted the MVP demo in a Facebook student group and got 40 signups in the first week.***

**20. What are the barriers to entry in this market?**

**How difficult is it to enter the market? Are there any regulations, laws or other hurdles stopping you from entering right now? If so, how will you address them?**

***Example: The app market is very competitive. We need to ensure good user retention, build trust, and make our user experience very simple. There's also***

*some challenge in keeping food-related data up to date. We'll solve this with user feedback and simple design iterations.*

21. **What do you understand about your business that other companies in it just don't get?**

**In other words, what is your competitive advantage? How did you identify it and why don't any of your competitors use it?**

*Example: Other apps try to be everything to everyone. We are focused on a specific lifestyle – student life. We know that fast, cheap, and social (roommate-friendly) is more important than advanced cooking skills. That's where we differentiate.*

22. **Who are your direct competitors? Tell us about a competitor who's doing something right and explain. Please, provide URLs.**

**Give us a detailed description of a few competitors. Include links to their products/services and tell us why they are successful in what they do.**

*Example:*

*Tasty (https://tasty.co/) – Great branding and snackable content. But it's more entertainment than functional meal planning.*

*Mealime (https://www.mealime.com/) – Nice UI and meal plans, but too geared toward working professionals with higher budgets.*
*We admire their clean design and will take inspiration from their onboarding flow. But we're going much more niche with student life.*

# Traction

**23. What traction have you achieved to date (if any)?**

**Select the one that best suits your stage.**

**24. How much time and money have you invested in this project so far?**

**Be honest here. It's normal to not have invested any money yet, tell us how much time per week each team member allocates to working on the idea. If you have invested money, please state how much and for what.**

***Example: We've invested around 300 hours total. Money-wise, around €150 on domain, Webflow, Airtable, and testing tools.***

**25. How many customers (paying/not paying) do you have on board? What are your revenues per month for the last few months? (if any)**

**Answer only if applicable.**

***Example: We have no paying customers yet. 40 users are testing the MVP and we're collecting feature feedback. Revenue: €0.***

**26. What metrics/KPIs do you use to track your growth? Give us the numbers for the last few months. (if any)**

**How will you evaluate your company's performance? What are the key performance indicators you will be looking at to make sure you are on track?**

***Example: We're tracking: Active users per week, Recipes generated per user, Time spent in app, NPS score***

**27. What is the next milestone you plan to achieve in the next 6 months?**

**What is the most realistic but still ambitious thing you can accomplish in that time frame. Be honest, we do not expect miracles.**

***Example: Launch iOS version of the app, grow user base to 500 active users, test a subscription feature, and start talking to student unions for partnerships.***

**28. How do you envision to spend the $2,000 you have access to throughout the program? Do you have any specific expenses in mind that you want to cover with this money?**

**How will that initial grant help turn your idea into a reality? What will you buy with it that is crucial for your startup's growth/development?**

***Example:***

***$500 – Mobile app development tools (e.g. Expo, TestFlight, Firebase)***

***$400 – Design assets and branding***

***$600 – Facebook/Instagram ads targeted at students***

***$500 – User testing and launch event at our university***

# Help Us Improve

**29. Are there any specific mentors you think we should invite?**

**If you have a specific person you think will be of help to you, please list them here so we can do our best to invite them or at least to connect you directly with them.**

***Example: Anyone with experience in launching student-targeted apps or in food tech. For example, someone from Too Good To Go or someone who has worked at Yummly.***

**30. How did you hear about this program?**

**Select whichever one is most applicable.**

**31. Is there anything else about your idea that you think we should know?**

**In case you have an answer to a question we have missed, please add it here.**

***Example: We're planning to include accessibility features (text-to-speech recipes, high contrast mode), and we're very open to feedback. We want MealMate to become a daily tool for thousands of students who are just trying to get by.***